



CORNELIUS, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, AND FAVOR OF THE
APOSTOLIC SEE, ARCHBISHOP OF HALIFAX.

*To the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Halifax, health
and benediction in the Lord:*

DEARLY BELOVED :

Man, the work of God's right hand, being composed of a body that is visible, and an invisible soul, belongs partly to the Material and partly to the Spiritual Order. He has, moreover, been raised by the will of his Maker to a supernatural state, having been endowed with an almost unlimited capacity for happiness, and fitted for the attainment of everlasting bliss. By reason of his material part man tends to earthly and sensual things; but on account of his spiritual soul he can never be satisfied with these; he longs for and aspires to something above and beyond the vulgar pleasures of the sense. It is a sad truth that many lead the lives of brutes, degrading their nature by living "according to the flesh," glorying, sometimes, in their shame, or seeking to excuse their conduct by asserting that all are equally vicious. These "animal men," like those of whom St. Peter spoke, "who have walked in riotousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquettings and unlawful worshipping of idols" (I Pet. IV—3) are not, and cannot be satisfied with these things; yet, do they, as the same apostle speaks, "think it strange that you run not with them into the same confusion of riotousness, speaking evil of you." They cannot destroy the spiritual nature of the soul, but they succeed in degrading it. In the war that is waged between the body and the spirit they weakly yield the victory to the flesh: they forget the warning words of the apostle—"For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live."—(Rom. VIII—13). How few, alas! heed those words; how many look upon them as mere empty sounds. "The animal man," living "according to the flesh," abounds on every side. Hence it is that the world offers a premium for vice; the scoffer of Holy Scripture is called "learned"; the drivelling sceptic is an "advanced thinker"; the miserable sophistries, the senseless jargon of materialists are

looked upon as deep philosophy : immoral publications find a ready sale : social honours are showered upon the successful swindler, and only the believers in God's Providence are held up to ridicule.

This is no overdrawn picture ; it is no diseased imagination ; it is a sad and sober truth. Let any man calmly look at the world, its modes of speech, and its heroes, and he will see how little they are in accord with the Gospel of Christ, but how like to the state of the Gentiles, described by St. Peter, who have walked in riotousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings and unlawful worshiping of idols."

But our Holy Church, Dearly Beloved, is not content with pointing out and deploring the evils that afflict society. Like a skilful physician she probes the wound, and applies the remedy. Her mission is a mission of labor, not of empty talk and unprofitable theorizing. Her ministers are not to ascend the pulpit to beat the air with high-flown phrase and sensational declamation ; they are to "utter by the tongue plain speech," otherwise, "how shall it be known what is spoken"? (Cor. XIV—9.) They are warned to be exact, "for if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to battle"? The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ continued to our own day ; her methods are His methods ; her voice is His voice—"who hears you hears me." Just as through him "men were made alive," so through her men are to be sanctified. She may be despised and persecuted even as He was, but still she will labor for the conversion of souls, and triumph by divine charity in the end.

What then is the special remedy for the pride, and lust, and drunkenness, which are the fountain sources of nearly all the sins of our time? Are we to look upon these as inseparable from our nature, and almost, if not entirely, incurable? Our Church, the trumpet of Christ, "gives no uncertain sound"; hence those who prepare not to battle are inexcusable. We are first admonished of the prevalence of these evils, so that we may realize our danger, and realizing it apply the prevention or cure. But we are taught : "Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted of God : for God is not a tempter of evils ; and he tempteth no man." Then there is placed before us the glorious example of God's holy ones,—mortals like ourselves,—who lived undefiled in the midst of an unclean world, and amongst a faithless people were faithful to God's law. If they, strengthened by the graces received through the sacraments, could do this, why cannot we, aided by these same sacraments, do likewise?

In the midst, then, of the faithlessness, pride and corruption of the world what an incentive to virtue is a serious consideration of the life of God's most grace-endowed creature. Perfect humility in the most exalted station: absolute chastity in the midst of a carnal-minded people, entire self-denial in every stage of her life,—such is the beautiful and consoling picture presented for our imitation by the life of the Blessed Virgin. And how completely is not that life opposed to the life of the “animal man.” Little wonder that he is impatient of her praises, or that he even blasphemes her holy name. Every word spoken in her praise is a condemnation of himself: every exaltation of her incomparable virtue shows more fully the loathsomeness of his base deeds. He lives “according to the flesh,” and, consequently, shall die”; she mortified by the Spirit, “the deeds of the flesh,” and, therefore, she “shall live.”

Whilst, then, it is only natural that the “animal man” should hate the name of the Blessed Virgin, so it is equally natural that Holy Church should love her, and should propose her life as a model for those who wish to walk as children of light. Hence the Pope has ordered a Solemn Triduum to be celebrated in each Diocese on the sixth, seventh and eighth of the coming September, in honour of the Glorious Virgin Mary. For centuries the eighth of September has been kept in the Church as the day of nativity of our Lady. This celebration goes back to the early ages of Christianity; it was always a day of joy for the Faithful. St. Peter Damian gives us the reason: “Let us rejoice,” he says, “on this day, dearly beloved, on which, whilst venerating the birth of the Most Blessed Virgin, we also celebrate the beginning of all the Festivals of the New Testament.” Yes; as she was mother of the God-made man through whom all Christian celebrations have come, her birth is truly the beginning of them all, for, without her, they would never have been. And before him Peter of Sicily had said: “To-day clear signs of our reconciliation with God are seen; to-day our humanity, formerly cast away, rejoices beholding the beginning of its restoration.”—(In Concep. Deip. Or.) Isidore of Thessaly, after relating the creation of light, as recorded by Moses, adds: “But I say that after the birth of man, and for a long series of years, another kind of darkness was spread over the whole earth until the joyous birth of the most pure and Blessed Virgin shed light over all the world.”—Orat. in Nativ. B. V.)

Thus through the ages the nativity of our sweet Mother was celebrated with joy by her loving children; they offered her their homage, and they asked her prayers. This is what we are now called upon to do. But as the teaching of our religion re-

garding devotion to the Blessed Virgin is so often, and, it would seem, at times, wilfully, misrepresented, a few words on this subject may not be amiss. We believe that to God only is supreme honour due; only He can give grace, sanctify souls, and bestow on the deserving everlasting happiness. There is only one Redeemer, Jesus Christ; there is no other name under heaven through which salvation can be obtained. This is what Catholics believe, what they are taught in their Catechism, what they hear from the pulpit, what they profess publicly and privately. But whilst they hold fast to this, they know that it is lawful to honor God's holy ones, and especially our Blessed Lady; they know that it is as lawful to ask her prayers as to ask those of our friends on earth; and they know of a surety that God will listen to her more readily than to those who are less perfect.

That we should honor our Blessed Lady and sing Her praises, God himself taught us. In the first Chapter of St. Luke we are told how God sent His Angel to the Virgin Mary. The angel was sent on the most important of Missions; the Son of God was about to assume human flesh, and the angel was to make this known to His future mother. The words spoken by the Angel were the words of God, the respect shown by the Angel was the outcome of God-given knowledge. What were these words? Will it be believed that they were the same which we are blamed for repeating! But there they stand recorded for ever in Holy Writ: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women." What more do we want? God teaches us through His Angel, the measure of respect and praise which is to be accorded to our Lady. She is "full of grace"—that is, without any room for shade or thought of sin; the Lord is with her,—therefore most dear to Him, most beloved by Him, most powerful to obtain favors from Him. She is "blessed among women,"—therefore the noblest type of womanly perfection, the grandest embodiment of human virtue. This is what God teaches regarding our Blessed Lady; our devotion to her requires no other justification.

But not only are we taught to honor her, we are, also, taught that through her God is pleased to work His greatest wonders. Through her all good has come to mankind, for through her has come the Redeemer, the incarnate God. To give us confidence in her intercession for the obtaining of special graces, Holy Scripture records that the first spiritual favor conferred by the incarnate Lord, viz., the sanctification of the Baptist, was conferred through the instrumentality of the Blessed Virgin. The words of the Gospel are unmistakable; Elizabeth "filled with the Holy Ghost" asserts that "as soon as the voice of thy

salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy." Treating of this event the great St. John Chrysostom wrote fourteen centuries ago; "For although Christ reposing in the womb of his mother could have sanctified John as his precursor he could not have done it in a manner apparent to all. Therefore he caused Mary to salute Elizabeth so that the word, proceeding from the bosom of the mother, where the Lord was indwelling, and passing through the ears of Elizabeth, might descend to John, and thus anoint him as a prophet. (Hm. 27 in C. 2 Math.) And in the third century Origenes wrote: "Before Mary had arrived and had saluted Elizabeth, the infant did not rejoice in her womb; but as soon as Mary had spoken the word, which the Son of God, in the womb suggested to his mother, the infant exulted for joy, and then first Jesus made his precursor also his prophet." (Hom. VII in Luc.)

Holy Scripture also records that Christ's first miracle was performed at the request of his Blessed Mother. At the marriage feast, in Cana of Galilee, Christ did a "beginning of miracles," and he did it sooner than he would have have done, because asked by her, for he tells us "My hour is not yet come." (John 22.) According to Christ Himself, His almighty power would not have been used so soon, were it not for the request of our dear Mother. And still men, whose knowledge is just sufficient to enable them to blaspheme, would have us believe that her intercession is of no avail, and that God never exercises His omnipotence, in modifying the forces of nature, at the prayer of the just man. God abrogates no law when working a miracle; he who is the author of natural forces and as a consequence of natural laws, has not abdicated his mastery over them; they exist because he has willed it; they act in this, or that manner because he gave them that initial direction. As the skilled engineer, by a slight movement of his finger, can, without changing or destroying the laws of action in a complicated machine, produce various and, apparently, contradictory effects, can make the huge hammer or threatening saw arrest its destructive course, and turn back when within an inch of a human head; so God, the architect and engineer of the universe, without destroying his own laws, can guide and govern their action, can stay the march of disease, arrest the storm cloud, or send to the parched earth refreshing showers. A little understanding of the relation between God the cause, and natural laws—effects produced by Him—would silence the outcry, born of ignorance and materialism, against the possibility of miracles.

Since, then, dearly beloved, the Blessed Virgin is the highest and holiest type of womanhood, the glory of the human race, a

model for all who do not wish to live "according to the flesh," lest they should die, but who wish to mortify by the spirit the "deeds of the flesh" so that they may live, do ye all celebrate with loving hearts the feast of her nativity. Reflect on her beautiful life, so pure, so unselfish, so humble, so filled with love for God and her neighbour. The world may laugh at you, it may go on in its brutal animal way, steeped in pride and lust; but what of that? The world hated and persecuted Christ; it hated and persecuted His Apostles and holy ones; if it hates and persecutes you, it is a sign that you strive to imitate them. Whilst humbly doing your duty towards God and man, defend manfully your own rights.

In order to carry out the instructions of the Holy Father, we ordain that in each Church of this diocese, where a priest is residing, a solemn triduum, in honor of the blessed Virgin, shall be celebrated on the sixth, seventh and eighth of September of this year. The devotions to consist of the recitation of five decades of the Rosary, after which the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed, the O! Salutaris, and Litany of Loretto, with versicle and prayer to be sung, followed by the *Tantum Ergo* and Benediction. An Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines is granted by the Holy See for each time one is present at the devotions; those who attend on the three days, can gain a Plenary Indulgence, applicable to the souls in Purgatory, by confessing and receiving Holy Communion within the triduum, and praying according to the intention of the Holy Father.

Do you, dear brethren of the Clergy, exhort your people to devoutly celebrate this triduum in honor of the Queen of Heaven. Untold blessings will be brought down on the Parish in which priest and people will unite with pure heart, and trusting spirit, in adoring God and honouring the Immaculate Virgin. Dissensions will be healed, hardened hearts will be softened, the good will be strengthened, the wavering confirmed, sinners converted. A moment of grace for which, perhaps, you have been praying, is about to be given to your people: souls for which you will have to give an account may now be rescued, if only your zeal will second the intentions of Holy Church. Whilst inculcating true and tender devotion to our Lady during these days, strive to make it lasting by spreading good books, and by inducing all to join some pious Sodality or Confraternity. Endeavour to get boys after making their first Communion to join some Sodality for the young. By prudent rules, and the watching care of the Pastor, these Sodalities for the young can be made to produce incalculable good. Our Holy Father has repeatedly exhorted all, old and young, to become members of some pious Confraternity. The Children of Mary, St. Vincent of Paul,

and the Third Order of St. Francis, have been specially mentioned. For young boys a special Sodality could be formed, in which the leading feature would be monthly Communion. If we are to have virtuous men,—men of faith and prayer,—we must train up boys to a frequentation of the Sacraments. This can be accomplished more readily through means of a Sodality than in any other way.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

This Pastoral shall be read in every Church of the Diocese, on the first Sunday after its reception.

† C. O'BRIEN,

Abp. of Halifax.

E. F. MURPHY,

Secretary.

Halifax,

Feast of the Assumption,

1884.